

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Saturday, April 20, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "INSECT NEWS." Information from the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

The news today comes from entomologists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture--those scientists working to find new ways to control harmful insects, or make helpful insects of more benefit to man.

The first item of news today is about mosquitoes.

If you have the idea you're the favorite food of mosquitoes, you're flattering yourself. Human beings rank low on the mosquito bill of fare. Cattle, horses, pigs, and even dogs are much more appetizing to the lady mosquito--and she's the only one that bites, you know.

Tests made by Federal entomologists show that if Mrs. Mosquito has free choice, she'll choose to lunch on cattle and horses 6 times as often as on humans. And she'll make a dinner date with a pig 3 times as often as with you or me. She even finds dogs more appetizing than men. But when she has to make a choice between lunching on you or me or on a chicken or cat, she'll come our way. The entomologists find that man rates just ahead of chickens and cats as a preferred source of the blood most biting mosquitoes need before they can begin depositing eggs.

Perhaps you are wondering how the entomologists discovered these facts about the mosquito's taste in food. They developed a special test to identify blood. And they used this test on the blood of hundreds of mosquitoes which had just made a meal on the animal of their choice. The scientists recorded where the blood in each mosquito came from.

4/20/40

But the mosquito is not a fussy feeder; she takes what she can get, the scientists say. Of the mosquitoes they captured inside houses, more than a third contained human blood. The scientists do find, however, that some humans are more attractive to mosquitoes than others.

By the way, if you want to know how to avoid mosquito trouble this summer, the Department of Agriculture has a free leaflet to help you. Send a postcard to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for the leaflet called "Domestic Mosquitoes." If you want to order by number, just ask for Leaflet No. 186. This leaflet is free while the free supply lasts. You are welcome to a copy.

Now for some news about the Japanese beetle. You're lucky if you haven't made the acquaintance of this insect pest. Federal officials are doing their best to keep it from spreading beyond the eastern States where it has been causing such havoc in fruit trees, shade trees, gardens, lawns, and flower beds. And in February nurserymen and plant quarantine officials from 18 States and Canada met in Washington, D. C., to decide whether to keep the quarantine on parts of the country having the beetle. They voted in favor of the quarantine. So, early this month the Secretary of Agriculture signed the order calling for the Federal Japanese Beetle Quarantine to be continued. The States affected by the quarantine this summer will be Ohio and West Virginia; Connecticut and New York; New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. Federal inspectors on the roads examine fruits, vegetables or plants travelling out of the quarantine area to keep the beetle from migrating to other parts of the country.

By the way, tests made last summer indicate that Japanese beetles like the color yellow better than green and white. At least, yellow traps caught more beetles last summer than the green and white traps. So the beetle traps this year are all painted a bright yellow. The entomologists expect the new yellow traps

to catch 50 percent more beetles than the green and white traps did. Each summer the entomologists use 80 thousand traps in their scouting work. The traps are their method of finding out whether the beetles have moved beyond the quarantine area. Last summer all the traps painted yellow caught more beetles than those painted green. A bright deep "butter" yellow appears to be the most attractive color for beetles.

So much for news about mosquitoes and Japanese beetles. Now here's an item about insects that help heal wounds. Perhaps you remember some years ago when doctors found that the maggots of the blowfly help stubborn wounds to heal. Dr. William Robinson of the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine has been following up that discovery by finding out why and how maggots are so helpful.

Back in 1935 Dr. Robinson discovered that maggots give off a secretion called allantoin that helps wounds heal. The next year he found another simpler chemical in maggot secretions that also has a healing effect. Recently he has discovered that maggots produce a common and inexpensive chemical called ammonium bicarbonate, and that this compound stimulates healing very much like the healing by the maggots themselves. Dr. Robinson reports that physicians and surgeons have found ammonium bicarbonate helpful with wounds that would not heal with other treatment.

All three of the healing products which Dr. Robinson discovered in maggot secretions are also made synthetically by chemical means.

That's all the news from the entomologists I have for you today.
Listen for more next week.

#####

